

NWA snares The Lariat

Who was the last man to have been the crowd-favorite when matched up with Hulk Hogan?

Who popularized what may be today's most overused wrestling maneuver, the clothesline?

Who is the most popular American wrestler in Japan? Who was in the main event for the second largest wrestling crowd ever in New York and for two of the four largest in Tokyo but will be appearing on a pay-per-view wrestling show for the first time this Saturday?

The answer to all these questions is Stan (The Lariat) Hansen, who gained his first international fame by accident. In a 1976 match with then-Worldwide Wrestling Federation (the group was called WWWF until 1980 when it switched to WWF) champ Bruno Sammartino, Hansen bodyslammed Sammartino wrong, dropping him on his head and fracturing Sammartino's neck legitimately. It was hyped at the time that it was the "lariat," Hansen's clothesline maneuver, that injured Sammartino, and a legendary and now incredibly copied maneuver was born. A rematch between the two drew more than 32,000 fans to Shea Stadium.

Hansen, 41, makes his pay-per-view debut Saturday night on the National Wrestling Alliance's "Halloween Havoc" show from the UIC Pavilion in Chicago. Because of his extensive commitments in Japan, Hansen hasn't worked for either the NWA or WWF until now. He's on this show because the NWA agreed to use him between his Japan tours.

Already the holder of three different championships in Japan, he goes for No. 4 on Saturday when he opposes U.S. champ Lex Luger in the semifinal at "Havoc." The main event sends NWA champion Sting against Sid Vicious.

At 6-2 and nearly 300 pounds, Hansen is the most popular and highest paid (at \$10,000 per week) U.S. wrestler in Japan. Along with his longtime friend and tag-team partner, the late Bruiser Brody, Hansen redefined what brawling pro wrestling was all about in the early 1980s in Japan and gained a huge following. His popularity grew after Brody was murdered in 1988. Fans, who always respected his toughness, viewed him with a sympathetic eye as well when it became well known how he had taken a father-like role with Brody's young son, Geoff.

This past April, the WWF combined with two Japanese promotions to put on a show at Tokyo's 60,000-seat Egg Dome. Ticket sales were somewhat disappointing for the Hulk Hogan vs. Terry Gordy main event with the crowd expected to be about 35,000. Just days before the event, Japanese promoter Shohei Baba convinced Vince McMahon to replace Gordy with Hansen, sales picked up and more than 52,000 attended. While Hansen lost that match, he was the crowd favorite.



**GRUNT
AND
GRIN**

BY DAVE MELTZER
FOR THE NATIONAL

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ETC: To hurt the "Havoc" live gate, the WWF scheduled a card at the Rosemont Horizon headlined by Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage for the WWF title. . . . The WWF is continuing to advertise Rick Rude as appearing against Big Bossman even though Rude quit the promotion three weeks ago.